Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 279533

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S E C R E T STATE 279533
C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (TEXT GARBLED THROUGHOUT)
FOLLOWING SENT USMISSION NATO INFO HONG KONG TOKYO PEKING
NEW DELHI FROM SECSTATE WASHDC 20 DEC 74:

QUOTE S E C R E T STATE 279533

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: NATO, PFOR, CH, UR
SUBJECT: STATE OF THE SINO-SOVIET DISPUTE

REFS: A2 USNATO 6985 (NOTAL)
B) STATE 264651 (NOTAL)

1. RATHER THAN OFFER FURTHER COMMENTS ON THE NATO POLADS DRAFT ON SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS, WE HAVE CHOSEN TO PROVIDE A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THIS QUESTION, WHICH YOU MAY USE AS BACKGROUND IN YOUR NEXT MEETING.

2. THE MOST IMPORTANT CHANGES THAT HAVE OCCURRED OVER THE PAST TWO YEARS IN SINO-SOVIET RELATIONS ARE THE LEVELIN-OFF OF THE SOVIET BUILDUP OF GROUND FORCES ON THE FRONTIERS AND ABANDONMENT BY THE CHINESE OF THE LINE THAT SOVIETS POSED A NEAR-TERM MILITARY THREAT TO THE PRC. BEGINNING THIS SUMMER, THE CHINESE EVEN WENT SO FAR AS TO STATE THAT SOVIET FORCES ON THE CHINESE BORDER WERE NOT SUFFICIENT FOR DEFENSE, LET ALONE OFFENSE. THIS CHANGE IN THE CHINESE
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PAGE 02 STATE 279533

POSTURE IS PROBABLY RELATED NOT ONLY TO THE LEVELING-OFF OF

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

THE SOVIET BUILDUP BUT ALSO TO CHINA'S DIPLOMATIC GAINS AND ITS DEPLOYMENT OF A NUCLEAR CAPABILITY AGAINST EUROPEAN RUSSIA.

THUS, THE CHINESE PROBABLY DO BELIEVE THAT THEY HAVE TURNED SOMETHING OF A CORNER IN THEIR MILITARY CONFRONTATION WITH THE SOVIET UNION AND THAT THE CHANCES OF AN IMMINENT SOVIET ATTACK HAVE BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED. NEVERTHELESS, THE SOVIET UNION REMAINS THE PRC'S OVER-RIDING SECURITY CONCERN. THE CHINESE ARE STILL 2STORING GRAIN AND DIGGING TUNNELS" FOR FUTURE CONTINGENCIES AS WELL AS FOR THE PRESENT SHOULD THEIR CALCULATIONS ABOUT SOVIET NEAR-TERM INTENTIONS PROVE MISTAKEN.

3. FOR SOME TIME PEKING HAS BEEN FOCUSING ON SOVIET LONG-RANGE AND STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES. FOR MORE THAN A YEAR, PEKING HAS NOT LOST ANY OPPORTUNITY TO INSIST THAT THE STRATEGIC FOCUS IS ON EUROPE AND SECONDARILY ON THE RELATED MIDDLE EAST ARENA. NEVERTHELESS, THE CHINESE CONTINUE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE CLOSE RELATIONSHIP OF EUROPEAN AND CHINESE SECURITY. THE CHINESE PUBLIC VIEW, WHICH MORE OR LESS PROBABLY REFLECTS THEIR PRIVATE ASSESSMENT AS WELL, PORTRAYS SOVIET OBJECTIVES AS: NEUTRALIZATION OF THE UNITED STATES FROM INVOLVEMENT IN EURASIAN SECURITY; THE FINLANDIZATION OF WESTERN EUROPE; ESTABLISHMENT OF A HEGEMONY IN THE MIDDLE EAST; AND ENCIRCLEMENT AND ISOLA-TION OF CHINA AROUND ITS ASIAN PERIPHERY. SOVIET MOVES IN THE MIDDLE EAST, THE INDIAN OCEAN AND WEST AND SOUTH ASIA AS WELL AS MOSCOW'S RECURRENT EFFORTS TO PROMOTE AN "ASIAN COLLECTIVE SECURITY" SYSTEM HAVE ONLY CONFIRMED TO THE CHINESE THEIR VIEW OF A LONG-TERM SOVIET DRIVE TO DOMINATE EURASIA AND ULTIMATELY TO BRING CHINA TO HEEL.

4. THE SECOND MAJOR STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT OVER THE PAST YEAR THAT HAS AFFECTED CHINA'S PERCEPTION OF SOVIET IN-TENTIONS AND CAPABILITIES IS THE ECONOMIC CRISIS IN THE WEST AND JAPAN. THE CHINESE ARE WORRIED THAT AN ECONOMIC AND MONETARY COLWAPSE COULD WEAKEN THE WILLINGNESS AND CAPABILITY OF THE WEST TO MAINTAIN ITS DEFENSES AND CBILD ENCOURAGE WESTERN COMPROMISES ON CSCE AND MBFR. POLITICAL

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UNCERTAINTIES IN NATO'S SOUTHERNFWANK HAVE ALSO HEIGHTENED CHINA'S CONCERN OVER THE UNPREDICTABILITY OF EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENTS. THUS, THE POSSIBILITY OF A WRENCHING OF THE GEO-POLITICAL BALANCE TO THE BENEFIT OF THE SOVIET UNION MUST BE SERIBUSLY WEIGHED BY THE CHINESE LEADERS IN SHAPING THEIR OWN POSTURE TOWARD THE USSR.

5. THE PAST YEAR HAS WITNESSED IMPORTANT INTERNAL POLITI-

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

CAL DEVELOPMENTS IN CHINA THAT ARE ALSO RELEVANT TO SINO-SOVIET REWATIONS. ONE MAJOR ASPECT OF THE ANTI-LIN PIAO ANTI-CONFUCIOUS CAMPAIGN WAS AN EFFORT TO EXPUNGE ANY REMNANT SENTIMENT FOR A SOFTER LINE TOWARD THE SOVIETS BY IDENTIFYING SUCH SENTIMENT WITH THE TRAITOROUS FORMER DEFENSE MINISTER. NUMEROUS HISTORICAL ARTICLES IN THE PEKING PRESS HAVE WARNED AGAINST MAKING CONCESSIONS TO THE ENEMY TO THE NORTH. ALL OF THIS SUGGESTS NOT ONLY THE DEPTH OF THE CURRENT LEADEJS' HOSTILITY TOWARD THE SOVIET UNION BUT ALSO A FEAR THAT THEIR SUCCESSORS MIGHT TRY TO MAKE A DEAL WITH THE SOVIETS OR REDUCE THE PRESENT PRIORITY ACCORDED THE IDEOLOGICAL AND POLITICAL CHALLENGE TO MOSCOW.

6. THE SOVIETS ARE OF COURSE CONCERNED ABOUT THE SECURITY OF THEIR BORDERS BUT THEY DO NOT SEE A MAJOR MILITARY THREAT AT THE PRESENT TIME FROM CHINA. MOSCOW IS PRIMARILY CONCERNED ABOUT THE PR C'S POLITICAL AND IDEOLOGICAL CHALLENGE AND APPREHENSIVE ABBUT THE POSSIBILITY OF SINO-US COLLUSION AT ITS EXPENSE. THE IDEA OF A SURGICAL SOLUTION FOR THE CHINESE PROBWEM, HOWEVER, HAS BECOME INCREASINGLY UNTHINKABLE. MOREOVER, MOST SOVIET CHINA EXPERTS NO LONGER BELIEVE THAT A LIGHT WILL APPEAR AT THE END OF THE TUNNEL ONCE MAO GETS OUT OF THE WAY. THEY BELIEVE THAT BARRING AN UFEXPECTED WINDFALL, MAO'S SUCCESSORS WILL CONTINUE FOR SOME TIME--MAYBE A DECADE OR MORE--TO GIVE PRECEDENCE TO THE SECTARIAN STRUGGLE WITH SOVIET REVISIONISM AND TO CARVING OUT A GREAT POWER ROLE FOR THE PRC.

7. CONSEQUENTLY, THE SOVIETS ALSO APPEAR TO HAVE SETTLED DOWN FOR A LONG-TERM COMPETITION AND CONFRONTATION IN WHICH THEY WILL SEEK TO COUNTER CHINESE DIPLO-

MATIC THRUSTS AND WHEREVER POSSIBLE WEAKEN AND EMBARRASS THE PRC'S WORLD POSITION. AND AT TIMES OF INTERNATIONAL CRISIS THE USSR WILL NOT BE DIFFIDENT ABOUT USING FRONTIER TENSION OR A PRESSURE POINT AGAINST THE PRC. MOSCOW HAS BEEN BUSY THIS YEAR SEEKING TO ARRANGE A WORLD CONFERENCE OF COMMUNIST PARTIES FOR 1975. IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THE SOVIETS EXPECT THIS MEETING FORMALLY TO CRITICIZE THE PRC. THE SOVIETS CAN ONLY HOPE THAT THE ABSENCE OF THE CHINESE WILL IMPLICITLY UNDERSCORE THEIR ISOLATION FROM THE WORLD COMMUNIST MOVEMENT. NATURALLY, THE SOVIETS WILL ALSO BE ALERT TO EXPLOIT SIGNS OF WEAKNESS OR POLITICAL DIVISION WITHIN THE PRC.

8. IT IS GENERALLY AGREED THAT THE SINO-SOVIET BORDER DISPUTE IS BUT A SYMPTOM OF A BROAD POLITICAL

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005

RIVALRY. BEGINNING ABOUT 1970, THE SOVIETS APPEARED TO BELIEVE THAT BECAUSE OF THE BROADER IMPLICATIONS FOR CHINESE POLICY OF A BORDER SETTLEMENT WITH THE USSR, THE PRC'S FLEXIBILITY SERIOUSLY TO NEGOTIATE WAS RELATIVELY RESTRICTED. A BORDER AGREEMENT WOULD INDEED EMBARRASS THE MAJOR ELEMENT OF CHINA'S DIPLOMATIC LINE THAT FOCUSES ON THE SOVIET THREAT TO WORLD PEACE AND THE UNTRUSTWORTHINESS OF DEALING WITH MOSCOW. IF THERE WERE A SINO-SOVIET BORDER PACT, THE PRC'S STRIDENT WARNINGS AGAINST WESTERN DETENTE WITH THE SOVIETS AND ITS EFFORTS TO ENCOURAGE A STRONG JAPANESE STAND ON THE NORTHERN TERRITORIES ISSUE WOUWD BE EMBARRASSED. DESPITE THE RATIONALIZATIONS THAT WOULD BE MADE, THERE WOULD ALSO BE SOME CONFUSION AT HOME AND IN THE RANKS OF CHINA'S FRATERNAL FRIENDS SUCH AS ALBANIA.

9. THE CHINESE ANNIVERSARY MESSAGE OF NOVEMBER 6 TO THE SOVIETS DID NOT REPRESENT ANY NARROWING OF THE GAP ON THE MAJOR ISSUES IN THE BORDER DISPUTE. CHINESE AS WELL AS SOVIET OFFICIALS HAVE MADE NO BONES ABOUT THIS. EVEN IF THE CHINESE SHOULD DECIDE THAT A BORDER SETTLEMENT WAS ON BALANCE DESIRABWE, IT WOULD NOT AT THIS TIME PROBABLY HERALD ANY FUNDAMENTAL SHIFT IN THE PRC'S VIEW OF THE USSR AS ITS NUMBER ONE IDEOLOGICAL AND NATIONAL ENEMY.

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10. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT A COMBINATION OF INTERNAL CHANGES IN CHINA AND SOME ALTERATION OF THE GEO-POLITICAL BAWANCE IN THE WEST COULD CAUSE THE CHINESE TO BE MORE RECEPTIVE TO EXPLORING RAPPROCHEMENT WITH THE SOVIET UNION. BUT IT WOULD BE A FUNDAMENTAL RETREAT FOR CHINA TO DROP THE ANTI-SUPERPOWER LINE AND ADOPT EITHER A PURELY ANTI-US STANCE OR A POLICY OF COOPERATION WITH BOTH SUPERPOWERS. TO DO EITHER OF THESE THINGS WOULD MEAN TO ABANDON THE EFFORT TO CARVE OUT A CHINESE WORLD ROLE DISTINCTIVE FROM THAT OF THE SUPERPOWERS AND EFFECTIVELY TO DISCARD THE LEADERSHIP OF THE THIRD WBRWD. THUS, A COOPERATIVE, EXQEDIENT SINO-SOVIET ENTENTE COULD CONCEIVABLY EMERGE ONLY IN THE FACE OF AN OVERRIDING NON-SOVIET THREAT TO CHINA. LIKEWISE, A FRATERNAL PARTNERSHIP CONCEIVABLY COULD BE RESTORED, BUT ONLY IF THE SOVIETS WERE PREPARED TO GRANT THE PRC FULL EQUALITY OF LEADERSHIP IN EVERY ARENA, OR PERHAPS ALTERNATIVELY TO OFFER A DIVISION OF AUTHORITY WITH THE SOVIETS HOLDING SWAY IN THE WEST AND AND THE CHINESE IN THESEAST. A SOVIET WILLINGNESS

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TO DO EITHER OF THESE SEEMS OUT OF THE QUESTION FOR THE
FORESEEABLE FUTURE. SISCO UNQUOTE SUSCO

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